

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
TESTIMONY OF TERESA SANCHEZ, BOARD MEMBER
RIVERSIDE-SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY INDIAN HEALTH, INC.
CONCERNING THE PRESIDENT'S 2019
BUDGET REQUEST
FOR THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
May 9, 2018**

I am Teresa Sanchez and I am the Board Vice-President for Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health, Inc. located in Southern California. I am also a member of the California Area Tribal Advisory Council and a member of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. Thank you for the opportunity to testify concerning the health needs of tribal beneficiaries in southern California.

We are thankful for the support of Congress and the funding provided by the Subcommittee in the recently enacted FY 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 115-141, to improve the health status of our people. This is why it is so disappointing to us to see that funding for Community Health Representatives (“CHRs”) has been eliminated from the President’s 2019 budget for the Indian Health Service (IHS). We are adamantly opposed to such cuts, as the CHR program has been one of the most successful during our 50 years of operation. We also oppose the elimination of the Health Education program.

For these reasons, we call upon the bipartisan spirit demonstrated daily by this Subcommittee to restore these harmful budget cuts to the IHS budget and to the health programs our tribal citizens depend on for their health and wellbeing.

Our organization provides services to Native Americans across two of the largest counties in the Country. We employ nine CHRs that are a critical part of our program. Each CHR is specifically trained in home health care and they fill an important gap, providing care to patients outside the Doctor’s office. For instance, CHRs:

- Ensure patients follow the Doctor’s orders, such as eating properly, taking their Medications timely and appropriately, and exercising when needed;
- Talk through tough health care decisions with patients; and
- Direct patients to outside resources, such as local food pantries or housing assistance.

The list could go on and on. The loss of CHRs would be simply devastating to many Native American Communities that are located far from health clinics in urban areas. We therefore ask this Subcommittee to keep the CHR and the Health Education program fully funded for FY 2019 and for many years to come.

Another serious and long-term problem we face is the lack of IHS facilities construction funding. The three main IHS construction programs have largely excluded California Tribes.

For instance, Tribes often sit on the priority list for decades without ever receiving funds to build a new clinic. While the FY 2018 Appropriations Act contained \$497 million of new IHS construction funding, half of these funds were designated for Joint Venture Construction projects and related staffing packages. No California Tribes were approved for such projects, leaving almost no new money for California and no associated staffing dollars. Indeed, only one California Tribe has ever participated in the Joint Venture Program, and that was many years ago. Why? In our opinion, it is because IHS developed the selection criteria without consulting California Tribes.

Additionally, the 2017 Appropriations Act capped funding for the Small Ambulatory clinic program at \$5 million, so no California Tribes received grants from the program that year. We appreciate that the Subcommittee has identified \$15 million for small ambulatory clinics construction in the FY 2018 omnibus measure, within the \$243.48 million appropriation for Health Care Facilities Construction. Our request to the Subcommittee is simple. We need help getting construction funds to California Tribes. We would like to see California tribes receive a share of the FY 2018 small ambulatory clinic and other IHS construction funds to address healthcare facility space needs in our tribal communities.

Lastly, we need help getting the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to complete a lease of our clinic land. We have previously expressed our concerns regarding the BIA's lack of responsiveness and delays in processing this lease. Members of the House of Representatives, Congressmen Aguilar, Garamendi and the Staff of Congressman Ruiz and Congresswoman McCollum heard our concerns and agreed to write a letter to the BIA. We thank them for their help in removing these barriers.

Thank you for affording the Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health, Inc. the opportunity to submit testimony.